



Office of Educational Accountability

# "What is the difference between a test accommodation and modification?"

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The terms *accommodations* and *modifications* are often used interchangeably; however, there is a significant difference between these terms. Differentiating between them is essential for providing appropriate supports to students and a valid interpretation of test scores.

*Accommodations* do not alter or change the construct that is being measured. Accommodations result in changes in the way an assessment is given or taken. The use of eye glasses is a great example of an accommodation. The glasses do not provide an unfair advantage to some students; rather, they allow students with vision problems to access the materials in a manner similar to their peers. Accommodations for the WKCE are provided in the assessment matrix at <http://dpi.wi.gov/oea/pdf/assessmatrix07.pdf>. The allotted accommodations in the matrix, including practices such as changing the test setting or timing and/or the addition of assistive technology, maintain the same learning expectations for all students, yet lessen the effects of a student's language needs, impairment, and/or disability.

In contrast, *modifications* change what is measured by the assessment. For example, if administering a reading test designed to assess one's ability to decode, allowing the test to be read aloud by a proctor would change the construct being measured and be categorized as a "modification." Similarly, allowing a calculator on a computation test would change the assessment construct and be a "modification". In an assessment, modifications have a significant impact on the validity and reliability of assessment results. NCLB accountability requirements do not allow for the inclusion of modifications in a state accountability system. If modifications are used on the WKCE, students will count as non-participants for AYP purposes and no score will be received for those content areas where the modification is in use.